



NEWS ROUNDUP

19 June 2024 [08:00am]

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By: Jing Villamente

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By: Justin Reynolds

As the world intensifies its battle against climate change, the shipping industry stands at a crucial juncture. This is the first of two articles discussing how decarbonizing shipping through green hydrogen presents a unique opportunity for the Philippines to improve trade, create jobs, enhance energy and food security, and tap into burgeoning environmental markets.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

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Perched on the side of mountains in the Cordillera region, about 250 km north of Manila on Luzon island, enormous green steps rise to a height of 1,500 meters, funneling water from the mountaintop forests down to the rice terraces below.

Known in the Philippines as a “stairway to heaven,” the Ifugao rice terraces are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a 2,000-year-old indigenous engineering feat that is increasingly under threat due to climate change.

The ancestors of the indigenous Ifugao people carved the terraces by hand to irrigate their rice crops, which even now are a staple in the province.

This masterpiece of ancient agricultural engineering entered the UNESCO World Heritage list in 1995 and is often referred to as the “Eighth Wonder of the World” — and one of its most endangered. In May, one of the sites in Batad village collapsed after heavy rains, causing a landslide that damaged 12 terraces.

“At present, risks of damage to the rice terraces and to local culture are exacerbated due to increased temperatures, erratic rainfall, poverty, and demographic shifts, just to name a few examples,” Marlon Martin, a member of the Ifugao ethnic group and executive of the Save the Ifugao Terraces Movement, told Arab News.

“This makes loss and disruption of life in the terraces a strong possibility. As a result, you can see the landscape rapidly changing. These same vulnerabilities may cause the loss of traditions, indigenous knowledge, and intangible identity that connects the Ifugao to their ancestral lands and forebears.”

Aside from Batad, similar steep terraces can also be found in nearby Banaue, Mayoyao, Hapao and Kiangan. Covering about 10,360 sq. km, the extensive network would be at least 20,000 km in length — half the Earth’s circumference — if laid end to end.

Ancient engineers created the highland paddies by making walls with stones and mud. The terraces are designed to retain and also channel water to the steps below, immersing the paddies all year round.

The Ifugao see the terraces as integral to their identity and culture.

“People maintain the terraces because, primarily, it is of significant value to them as a people and as a culture. The terraces link them to their ancestors. It brings them together as a community, and this is how they keep traditional knowledge alive,” Martin said.

“People need to understand that these are not built monuments like Memphis and its Necropolis or the Great Wall, and that when you do restoration, you are already done. Year in and year out, Ifugao farmers need to restore, repair, and maintain the terraces.”

Yet the costs of maintaining the terraces are increasingly high, with erratic weather and effects of the changing climate making their cultivation economically unfeasible.

“Damages to paddy walls induced by drought and torrential rains associated with climate change make maintenance not worth the economic benefit. Were it not for the other values of the terraces, this alone would discourage people,” Martin said.

As part of the Preserving Legacies project, he has conducted a year-long study assessing the terraces’ climate vulnerability, and believes it is time for the government to step in to prevent the sites from being abandoned and losing UNESCO status.

“The government needs to subsidize rice terrace farmers,” he said. “Heritage, economics, socio-cultural solidarity, and a source of indigenous knowledge are key to the preservation of the terraces.”

For Raymond Macapagal, assistant professor at the University of the Philippines’ Center for International Studies and manager of the Batad Kadangyan Ethnic Lodges Project — a community-based tourism enterprise at the UNESCO site — a key strategy is to create opportunities for young people.

Over the past two decades, the younger generation’s migration to cities in search of other work has resulted in 30 percent of the terraces being abandoned. Developing tourism was one way to provide alternative sources of income.

“They will have a deeper understanding of the challenges and solutions in the complex task of safeguarding the terraces. They will also be more motivated to protect the landscape that provides their livelihood,” Macapagal said.

The rice terraces, featured on the Philippines’ 20-peso banknotes, are also a part and witness to the region’s long human history and remnants of millennia-old indigenous heritage.

“The significance of the Ifugao rice terraces to the Ifugao people, I believe, can be rooted in how it represents indigenous cultural heritage that has resisted centuries of colonization,” Macapagal said.

“It demonstrates the harmonious interaction of humans, gods, and nature in order to come up with an outstanding cultural landscape that is admired throughout the world.”

BUSINESS MIRROR

[Philippines, Sweden commit to make mining sustainable amid climate change impacts](#)

By: Jonathan L. Mayuga

The Philippines and Sweden have agreed to work together to promote sustainable mining in support of the green transition.

The Philippine mining industry is on track to making mining responsible and sustainable, with some mining companies even going beyond mere compliance with environmental and mining laws, said Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, as she welcomed the initiative of the government of Sweden to invest in mining in the Philippines, to make mining safer and environmentally sound.

At a news conference during the mining forum titled “Pioneering the Green Transition: Advancing Sustainable Mining” co-organized by Sweden and the Philippines in Makati City, Yulo-Loyzaga said the Marcos administration is committed to sustainable mining and works with all concerned sectors, including the industry and mining-affected communities.

In particular, Yulo-Loyzaga said publicly-listed mining companies have demonstrated responsibility in doing business in the Philippines.

“I think that we all need to be quite transparent and I think at this point we know that certain companies are well on the way to becoming sustainable and responsible. Mining companies that are publicly listed have accountability and global risk in the way they do business and they commit to their shareholders.

In terms of publicly-listed companies, we do see a higher degree of responsibility and the reporting standards as well are quite high,” says Yulo-Loyzaga.

As for other companies, she said there needs to be stricter compliance monitoring.

“We do have a good deal of responsible and sustainable mining that is ongoing and that is the direction we are headed,” she said.

Sweden’s Ambassador to the Philippines, Annika Thunborg, for her part, welcomed the Philippines’ commitment to responsible and sustainable mining, expressing her excitement to partner with the Philippines in mining.

“We welcome the Philippine government’s commitment to responsible mining,” Thunborg said.

“The forum aims to promote mining solutions and green technologies, create a platform to share Swedish technologies and innovations, and engage the academe, public and private sector,” she said.

Thunborg added that several Swedish companies that are doing business in the Philippines as well as those that are not yet in the Philippines, are looking at investing in the mining sector in the Philippines.

She said a large number of Swedish companies are attending the forum, to showcase their products that can help mining in the Philippines in terms of technology, equipment, and best practices that ensure the safety of the mines and miners.

DAILY TRIBUNE

[DENR pushes 'green transition' for sustainable mining](#)

By: Jing Villamente

Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga on Tuesday called on the mining industry to rethink, invent, and innovate the ways it develops the country's natural resources even as it must evolve to align with the principles of sustainability, stewardship and resilience.

"Our nation is at a pivotal juncture where the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection has never been more pressing. And while climate change has increased the complexity of risk across different scales and sectors, it also now represents opportunities for reform in this particular sector and industry," the DENR chief said during a mining forum held in Makati City on 18 June 2024.

Themed "Pioneering the Green Transition: Advancing Sustainable Mining," the forum was organized by the Embassy of Sweden and Business Sweden, with the Chamber of Mines in the Philippines as co-organizer.

Dignitaries who attended the forum included Ambassador of Sweden to the Philippines Annika Thunborg, Business Sweden Vice President Emil Akander, Swedish Government Ambassador for Sustainable Business Cecilia Ekholm, and Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) and Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC) Public Affairs Director Michael Toledo.

Endowed with rich mineral resources

Sweden acknowledged that the Philippines is endowed with rich mineral resources with a combined value of between \$.4 to 1 trillion.

Critical minerals that are vital to the manufacture of chip-driven gadgets and electric vehicle batteries such as gold, copper and nickel are among the Philippines' leading mineral exports providing the country with a unique opportunity to become a global leader in sustainable mining.

Loyzaga said the Philippines must leverage its natural wealth responsibly and equitably, ensuring that the socio-economic benefits of mining extend to all Filipinos, especially to the communities that host mining operations.

The DENR Secretary said the forum is an important platform for collaboration that is crucial to advancing Philippine Development Goals and international commitments to the Paris Agreement, Convention on Biodiversity, Sustainable Development Goals, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, among others.

"This all involves investing in science and technology and in integrating social and ecological considerations into our mining operations, promoting biodiversity as well, reducing carbon footprints, and implementing effective waste management practices. These must not just be part of our regulatory requirements but must now become essential elements of a progressive and responsible mining sector," Loyzaga said.

Biodiversity protection

The Secretary also highlighted that biodiversity protection, low carbon development, and the implementation of the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) are critical areas for the green transition of the mining industry.

To protect biodiversity, DENR Administrative Order No. 2022-04 mandates comprehensive guidelines to protect and conserve biodiversity in mining operations by emphasizing the integration of biodiversity management plans into mining practices to ensure conservation.

GMA NEWS

[Philippines stays at 52nd spot in world competitiveness ranking](#)

By: Ted Cordero

The Philippines' competitiveness ranking across the world remained at the same level as last year as challenges offset improvements this year, according to a report by Switzerland-based Institute of Management Development (IMD).

In its 2024 World Competitiveness Report, the IMD placed the Philippines 52nd out of 67 economies it ranked all over the world.

The country remained in the same spot as last year's.

The IMD's World Competitiveness ranking, first published in 1989, "analyzes and ranks countries according to how they manage their competencies to achieve long-term value creation."

The IMD's ranking divides its data into four areas, namely economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency, and infrastructure.

The four areas, together, capture various aspects of competitiveness, such as macroeconomic stability, fiscal policy, institutional quality, market openness, business dynamism, innovation, education, health, and environmental performance, according to the Swiss institute.

The IMD report said the Philippines ranked high in terms of the following:

- Employment (10th)
- Tax policy (15th)
- Domestic Economy (27th)
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However, it said that despite the strong overall performance, the World Competitiveness report also found that the country was less competitive in the areas of:

- Business Legislation (60th)
- Basic Infrastructure (62nd)
- Education (63rd)
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Among Asia-Pacific's 14 economies, the Philippines ranked 13th —unchanged for the five consecutive years.

The IMD's report cited the following challenges for the Philippines this year:

- Sustaining the country's job-generating investments
- Ensuring food security to temper inflation and keep prices affordable.
- Addressing learning gaps to improve the education system
- Building sustainable infrastructure to reduce climate change vulnerability

- Resolving the Philippines' territorial rights to the West Philippine Sea diplomatically and peacefully

In terms of other factors, the Philippines saw improvements in the domestic economy from 30th to 27th and public finance from 55th to 49th.

The report ranked Singapore as the most competitive economy in the world this year, followed by Switzerland and Denmark.

"We believe the most competitive economies of the future will be those able to anticipate and adapt to this changing global context while simultaneously creating value and well-being for their people. And that will also make them sustainable," said Arturo Bris, director of the IMD World Competitiveness Center (WCC).

Solar power can be your super power

The price of electricity in the Philippines is one of the highest in Asia. This continues to rise due to inflation rates and reliance on imported coal and fossil fuels. Because of this, we are all on the lookout for ways to lower our costs. Let's take a look at how renewable energy can make a difference.

What is renewable energy?

Also called 'clean energy', the United Nations defines renewable energy as derived from natural sources that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed. This includes solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower, ocean energy, and bioenergy. Solar energy is the most accessible form for Filipinos who want to find an alternative energy source and lower their electricity costs.

Renewable energy developer Gurin Energy's Country Manager in the Philippines Ping Mendoza says "Solar is the lowest cost, most accessible, and most derisked form of renewable energy technology that can be adopted by most households and small businesses."

Aside from lower cost, Mendoza explains that adding a battery to a solar photovoltaic system, a system that converts sunlight into electricity, can provide your household with back-up power similar to having a diesel generator without the noise, smells, and air pollutants.

He adds that investing in solar power can bring a "3 to 6 year payback period for a right-sized system with good quality installation that is expected to provide savings for 25 to 30 years with no moving parts and minimal risk of equipment breaking down".

Watch the basics explained by Oliver Austria, an advocate for solar power and renewable energy [here](#).

For those who have the resources to equip their homes with solar panels and batteries, a site called Yuda provides homeowners basic information, suppliers, and cost estimates to suit their needs.

Renewable energy can be a solution for the nation

On a wider scale, utilizing renewable energy can benefit Filipinos by providing more stable and affordable power to communities.

In a regional development plan from the National Economic Development Authority office in Eastern Visayas, it was shown that transition to solar power can lower power rates when becoming less reliant on energy produced from coal, which is priced according to the movement of global market trends.

Renewable energy projects are on the rise in the Philippines according to the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, though upgrades and adjustments have to be made to integrate these into existing power systems. Still, renewable energy is not

intermittent and “not affected by the volatility of prices in global markets as it is readily available in the country”.

#LetsGoRenewablePH

As the cost of setting up solar power systems becomes more affordable, these systems become more accessible. With advancements made in the technology, more individuals and communities will be able to adapt these into their lifestyle. These are steps that take us closer to realizing a future with clean energy.

As this future is still taking shape for us, we contribute by making use of convenient devices such as solar powered charging stations, power banks, and other small devices. We can contribute to everyone’s awareness about clean energy options and encourage others to take a step towards a brighter, solar-powered future.

Small steps lead to big changes. Learn more about the possibilities of solar power and see how you can contribute to a brighter tomorrow at letsgorenewable.ph.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PAGASA notes decline of areas under danger level heat index](#)

By Ma. Cristina Arayata

The weather bureau on Tuesday said it has observed a continuous decline in the number of areas under a danger level heat index, prompting it to suspend the issuance of daily heat index information.

In an advisory issued Tuesday afternoon, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said the end of El Niño and the frequent rainshowers and thunderstorms across many parts of the country resulted in the decline of areas under the danger level heat index category.

Heat index is what the temperature feels like to the human body when relative humidity is combined with air.

PAGASA considers 41 to 51 degrees Celsius as danger level heat index that could cause heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

In PAGASA's forecast in May, it expected over 40 to at least 18 areas under danger level heat index per day.

PAGASA has listed over 20 areas expected to experience danger level heat index for the past two days.

Meanwhile, PAGASA said it will focus on providing accurate and timely information on hazards and potential impacts of the rainy season.

Heat indices derived from automated weather stations can still be accessed on PAGASA's website to help assess areas that may still experience hot temperatures.

The daily monitoring and forecasts of heat index will resume on March 1, 2025, coinciding with the hot and dry season, the bureau said.

Plastic waste imminent threat to ecosystem

Plastic waste is classified as one of the largest threats to the ecosystem in all its forms due to its negative impact on soil and agricultural crops, as well as its role in the extinction of millions of terrestrial and marine species, thereby threatening global food security.

A recent report by the Switzerland-based non-profit EA Earth Action estimates that 220 million tonnes of plastic waste will be produced globally in 2024.

The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) has emphasized that plastic waste significantly affects marine life through ingestion by marine creatures or entanglement in plastic debris.

Additionally, the breakdown of plastics in sea water forms toxic chemicals that adversely impact human health through seafood contamination.

The agency highlighted that the greatest challenge comes from single-use plastics such as bags, bottles, and utensils, which persist for long periods as various types of waste in marine and terrestrial environments. These plastics break down into small particles known as microplastics (pieces less than 5mm in size), which enter the human body primarily through food, as well as through skin contact or inhalation.

Regarding the ban on plastic products, the agency indicated that there is no general ban on plastic products since many of them are irreplaceable. The ban specifically applies to plastic bags and certain single-use styrofoam products.

In 2020, the agency called for a reduction in the use of single-use plastics and non-plastics that can be avoided by promoting a culture of reuse and recycling, and encouraging the use of reusable alternatives with less environmental impact.

The agency implemented several campaigns to enforce the ban on plastic materials in June 2022, launching the community campaign "Mission to Zero initiative for single-use plastic" to achieve zero waste from single-use plastics and zero carbon emissions, without significantly impacting biodiversity.

The campaign aimed to encourage Abu Dhabi residents to switch to sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives, such as reusable materials, reduce reliance on single-use items, and minimize waste.

Imad Saad, an environmental expert, said plastics have become an integral part of the people's daily lives, with indispensable benefits, but also many negative aspects that must be addressed.

He added plastic waste is one of the most dangerous pollutants on Earth due to the non-biodegradability and recycling challenges of most plastics. It is a major cause of death for many terrestrial mammals and livestock, such as camels, cows, and sheep.

He cited statistics from the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment indicating that 50 percent of camel deaths in the UAE are caused by plastic bags.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Decarbonizing the shipping industry via green hydrogen](#)

By: Justin Reynolds

As the world intensifies its battle against climate change, the shipping industry stands at a crucial juncture. This is the first of two articles discussing how decarbonizing shipping through green hydrogen presents a unique opportunity for the Philippines to improve trade, create jobs, enhance energy and food security, and tap into burgeoning environmental markets.

The global imperative to combat climate change is reshaping industries, and the shipping sector is no exception. As countries implement carbon border taxes to penalize carbon-intensive goods, the Philippines stands at a crossroads. Embracing green hydrogen as a primary fuel for shipping not only aligns with global environmental mandates but also offers a transformative opportunity to boost trade, create jobs, enhance energy security, and improve food security. The transition to green hydrogen is not just an environmental necessity but a strategic economic move that can position the Philippines as a leader in sustainable maritime logistics and the production of green hydrogen.

Navigating carbon border taxes

The imminent introduction of carbon border taxes, particularly by major markets like the European Union and the United States, but also India, China, Australia and trading blocks in Africa pose a significant challenge to the global shipping industry. These taxes will penalize carbon-intensive supply chains, potentially increasing costs for countries relying heavily on fossil fuels for transportation. For the Philippines, a nation deeply integrated into global trade networks, this represents both a threat and an opportunity. By adopting green hydrogen as a primary fuel for shipping, the Philippines can not only sidestep these carbon tariffs but also position itself as a leader in regenerative maritime logistics. Green hydrogen, produced via electrolysis using hydro sources, emits no carbon dioxide when used as fuel. This transition could make Filipino exports more competitive in markets with stringent environmental regulations, thereby safeguarding and expanding the nation's shipping industry and trade volumes.

Job creation and technological advancement

The shift to green hydrogen is not just an environmental imperative but also a potent economic stimulus. Developing a green hydrogen economy requires significant technological and industrial investments, leading to the creation of thousands of jobs. The Philippines stands to gain from this through the transfer of hydrogen technology, which will necessitate skilled labor across various sectors, including engineering, manufacturing, and maintenance. Investing in green hydrogen technology can spur domestic innovation and capacity building. Filipino universities and research institutions can collaborate with international experts to cultivate a robust talent pool. This knowledge transfer will ensure that the Philippines remains at the forefront of the hydrogen economy, providing long-term employment and economic stability.

Energy and food security through green hydrogen

Green hydrogen production can significantly bolster the Philippines' energy security. The archipelago is rich in renewable energy resources, particularly hydropower. By harnessing hydro dams for green hydrogen production, the Philippines can reduce its reliance on imported fossil fuels, leading to greater energy independence and resilience against global energy market fluctuations. Moreover, green hydrogen can be converted into green ammonia, a crucial net zero component for fertilizers.

This process can enhance the country's food security by supporting Regenerative Agricultural practices. By producing green ammonia, the Philippines can reduce its dependence on imported fertilizers, ensuring stable and affordable agricultural inputs for its farmers. This will not only boost local food production but also protect the agricultural sector from global supply chain disruptions and increase trade as carbon border taxes come into place.

The environmental benefits of green hydrogen extend beyond immediate energy and food security. As global markets evolve, Environmental Markets are becoming a critical component of economic competitiveness.

The Philippines has the potential to become a major player in Environmental Markets by trading in Renewable Energy Credits from Hydrogen, or iREC-H.

The development of a robust green hydrogen sector can help the Philippines generate significant iREC-H, which can be traded internationally. With an estimated market potential of US\$14 billion, iREC-H represents a lucrative opportunity for the country. By investing in green hydrogen and other regenerative practices, the Philippines can not only reduce its environmental footprint but also create a new revenue stream, fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship through the meeting of the Philippines Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement and trading of ITMOs under Article 6 of The Paris Agreement in the Compliance Market.

Decarbonizing the shipping industry via green hydrogen is a multifaceted strategy that promises to deliver substantial benefits for the Philippines.

It positions the nation to comply with impending carbon border taxes, thereby safeguarding and enhancing its trade competitiveness. The shift also opens up vast employment opportunities, driving economic growth through technological advancements and industrial development. By leveraging its hydroelectric resources, the Philippines can achieve greater energy security, while the production of green ammonia ensures a sustainable future for its agricultural sector. Embracing green hydrogen is not merely an environmental obligation but a strategic imperative that paves the way for a prosperous and resilient future for the Philippines.

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